

Message Text

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43

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CASABLANCA FOR RFA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, LI

SUBJECT: FISH CULTURE IN LIBERIA: OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE

1. DURING RFA'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON (MAY 76) DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD CONCERNING POSSIBLE U.S. ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING LIBERIA'S INLAND FISHERIES THROUGH FISH CULTURE.

2. LIBERIA OFFERS EXCELLENT POTENTIAL FOR FISH CULTURE DUE TO AMPLE FRESH WATER RESOURCES, CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF FISH, AND WITH AREAS WHERE FOOD OR CASH INCOME INCREMENTS COULD BE BENEFICIAL.

3. MAJOR PROBLEM IS POLITICAL OPPOSITION FROM MESURADO FISHERIES COMPANY; GOL PRESIDENT TOLBERT MAJOR STOCKHOLDER IN MESURADO. RFA SPOKE TO MESURADO OFFICIALS AND WAS TOLD MESURADO WAS COMPLETELY OPPOSED TO ANY FORM OF COMPETITION WHICH WOULD AFFECT THEIR INLAND SALES OF MARINE FISH.

4. US/AID OFFICIALS INDICATED PREVIOUS FISH CULTURE PROJECT IN LIBERIA WAS NEGATIVELY INFLUENCED BY MESURADO'S OPPOSITION. AID FEELS MESURADO'S CONTINUED OPPOSITION WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL

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IN ANY FUTURE PROJECT AND MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

5. RFA DISCUSSIONS WITH MESURADO, HOWEVER, ALSO BROUGHT FORTH STATEMENT THAT LIBERIAN PRESIDENT TOLBERT WOULD ACCEPT A FISHERIES PROJECT FOR LIBERIA IF IT WOULD SERVE HIS POLITICAL INTEREST, OVER MESURADO'S INTERESTS.

6. MESURADO ALSO INDICATED THEY MIGHT BE WILLING TO PLAY A ROLE IN FISH CULTURE PROJECT, IF VENTURE WAS PROFIT-ORIENTED.

7. USAID HAS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN FISH CULTURE PROJECTS, BUT INDICATED TO RFA THAT GOL WOULD HAVE TO SHOW A SIMILAR INTEREST AND WOULD HAVE TO BE FIRMLY COMMITTED TO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN PROJECT. TO DATE NO SUCH COMMITMENT HAS BEEN MADE. GOL MAY BE APPROACHED IF DEPT. FEELS PROJECT WORTHY.

8. RFA RECOMMENDS CONSIDERATION OF A SMALL FISH HATCHERY AS POTENTIAL FIRST STEP. HATCHERY COULD RAISE DOMESTIC CATFISH AND TILAPIA FOR RELEASE INTO REMOTE LAKES AND RIVERS. HATCHERY COULD LATER SERVE AS SOURCE OF SUPPLY FOR ADDITIONAL FISH CULTURE PROJECTS, SUCH AS RICE PADDY PROJECTS, OR FOR SALE TO FARMERS.

9. CONCLUSION: LIBERIA COULD SERVE AS AN AREA FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE IN FISH CULTURE FIELD, BUT DUE TO POSSIBLE POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS SHOULD BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED WITH GOL OFFICIALS BEFORE ANY DECISION IS TAKEN.

10. EMBASSY COMMENT: EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT MESURADO WOULD NOT ACTIVELY OPPOSE PROJECT SUCH AS ENVISIONED BY RFA SINCE BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT WOULD BE LOCAL INLAND FISHERMEN AND RURAL POOR, NOT MAJOR CUSTOMERS OF MESURADO. RFA ALSO DISCUSSED PROJECT WITH PEACE CORPS, AND IT POSSIBLE THAT PROJECT COULD WORK WELL WITH PCVS. THIS APPEARS TO BE PROJECT WITH MANY WORTHWHILE BENEFITS WHICH COULD BE ACHIEVED AT MINIMAL COST AND SHOULD BE GIVEN CONSIDERATION BY WASHINGTON AGENCIES. BELIEVE PROJECT WOULD HAVE SUPPORT OF GOL.

11. USAID RESERVATION FOLLOWING SEPTTEL.
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